

"Jack was my life," says Exner of John Kennedy, shown here in April 1962.

THE DARK SIDE OF CAMELOT

John Kennedy's former lover Judith Campbell Exner tells at last of being the President's courier to the Mob

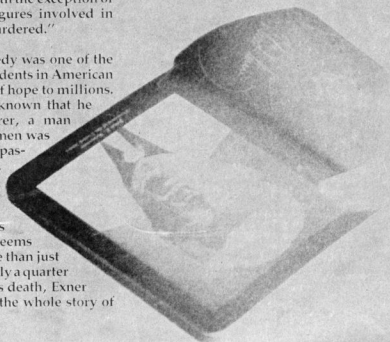
by Kitty Kelley

I lied when I said I was not a conduit between President Kennedy and the Mafia," says Judith Campbell Exner, the same woman who first shocked the nation 12 years ago with the revelation that she had had an affair with the President while he was in the White House. "I lied," Exner continues, "when I said that President Kennedy was unaware of my friendships with mobsters. He knew everything about my dealings with Sam Giancana and Johnny Roselli because I was seeing them for him. I wouldn't have been seeing them otherwise. And I would never have known mobsters if it hadn't been for Frank Sinatra.

"For the past 25 years I have been terrified to tell the truth about my relationship with Jack Kennedy," says Exner, speaking from a hotel room in Newport Beach, Calif. "In fact, I've gone to great lengths to keep the truth from ever com-

ing out, which is probably the only reason I'm alive today. With the exception of Sinatra, all the key figures involved in my story have been murdered."

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was one of the most charismatic Presidents in American history and a symbol of hope to millions. Yet it has long been known that he was also a philanderer, a man whose passion for women was exceeded only by his passion for politics. Exner, whose 2½-year affair has been widely publicized, was only one of many of JFK's women. But now it seems clear that she was more than just a mistress to him. Nearly a quarter of a century after JFK's death, Exner has decided to reveal the whole story of





Three of the men in Exner's life: first husband William Campbell (left), Sinatra and JFK (at the Inaugural Ball).

Cover

their relationship, and as she tells the tale, it is an extraordinary one indeed.

According to Exner, for 18 months in 1960 and 1961, she served as the President's link with the Mob. At Kennedy's request, says Exner, she regularly carried envelopes back and forth between the President and Sam Giancana, the head of the Chicago Mafia, as well as Johnny Roselli, Giancana's Los Angeles lieutenant. Furthermore, Exner says she arranged about 10 meetings between Kennedy and Giancana, one of which, she believes, took place inside the White House. Exner says she was never told what transpired between the President and the Chicago Godfather. But she has good cause to speculate that one of the meetings involved attempts to influence the crucial West Virginia Democratic primary before the 1960 election—and that others involved a more sinister subject: the CIA's collaboration with the Mafia to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro. These assassination plots ("Operation Mon-goose") were investigated by the Senate in 1975 and were documented in a 347-page Senate Select Intelligence Committee report. According to the report, there were at least eight plans to "eliminate" Castro, involving such exotic devices as poison pens, pills and cigars, exploding seashells and even a contaminated diving suit. (The Mafia, recruited in 1960, had their own motives for wanting to kill Castro: He had closed their casinos in Cuba.) Historians have never been able to estab-

lish what, if any, part Kennedy played in such assassination plans.

Exner's decision to speak out about her secret role on the dark fringe of the Kennedy Administration is triggered by her failing health. She had a mastectomy in 1978 and last year was diagnosed as having metastatic cancer. "I'm terminal," says Exner, 54, who had her left lung removed last August. "My doctor gives me about three years to live, and I want to put my life in order so that I can die peacefully. For that reason, I must now tell the truth."

The name Judith Campbell Exner first made headlines on Dec. 17, 1975. She had been mentioned in the Senate report as a "close friend" of JFK, Giancana and Roselli, and her identity had been leaked to the *Washington Post*. Exner called a press conference to deny any knowledge of underworld activities. Hiding behind large sunglasses, Judith, then 41, sat next to her second husband, Dan Exner, 29, a golf pro, and read from a prepared statement: "I can at this time emphatically state that my relationship with Jack Kennedy was of a close, personal nature and did not involve conspiratorial shenanigans of any kind. My relationship with Sam Giancana and my friendship with Johnny Roselli were of a personal nature and in no way related to or affected my relationship with Jack Kennedy. Nor did I discuss either of them with the other."

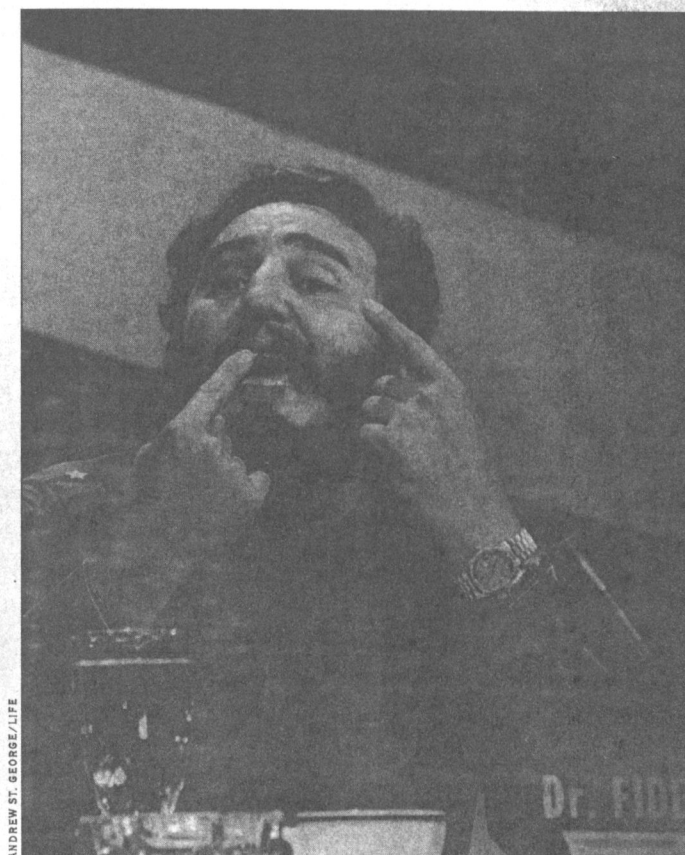
Exner was immediately vilified for her statement. "I was called a prostitute, a hooker and a tramp," she recalls. "My own mother-in-law called me a whore. I was

crucified because I had had the audacity to have an affair with Jack Kennedy. I loved him, but no one wanted to believe that he loved me."

Certainly Kennedy aides were eager to discredit the story. Though White House logs were later found to document about 70 phone calls between Exner and the President, Kenneth O'Donnell, Kennedy's appointments secretary, said he had never heard of her. Evelyn Lincoln, Kennedy's longtime personal secretary, dismissed Exner as a mere campaign worker.

To substantiate her claim, Exner wrote the 1977 book *My Story* with journalist Ovid Demaris. Part autobiography, part romantic journal, *My Story* describes her affairs with Kennedy and Giancana but makes no mention of her role as courier. Reviewers found Exner's story not only affecting but credible. The *New York Times* critic argued that the evidence Exner offered—addresses, telephone numbers, descriptions of White House decor—"makes the defensive protestations of the keepers of the Kennedy flame somewhat dubious."

Exner was born Judith Eileen Katherine Immoor and grew up in Pacific Palisades, Calif., where her father was an architect. Her paternal grandfather had made a fortune in real estate, and the family lived well. When Judith was 14, her mother nearly died in an auto accident. Traumatized and unable to continue high school, Judith was privately tutored. At 16, attending a Hollywood party with Robert Wagner, Judith met actor William Campbell. They wed two years later, and after an unhappy marriage, were divorced in 1958. During this period she was friendly with a Hollywood set that included Charlton Heston, Lloyd Bridges and Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher. Supported by funds from her parents and from an inheritance,



ANDREW ST. GEORGE/LIFE

Exner lived in Beverly Hills, where she did some painting. She also dined out often at glitzy restaurants.

One night in 1959 Exner ran into Frank Sinatra (whom she had met before in Hollywood) at Puccini's, a restaurant in Beverly Hills. Several days later Sinatra invited Exner to join him in Hawaii with his friend Peter Lawford and the actor's wife, Pat Kennedy Lawford. There, on Nov. 10, 1959, Judith and Frank began a brief affair. Though Sinatra was attentive at first, Exner found that he had a darker side: "In a flash he would change from charming to the blackest of moods. And then he would verbally abuse the people around him and demean them. After a short time I realized I did not respect him." The affair ended, she says, the night Sinatra invited her to his home in Beverly Hills and introduced another woman to their bed, expecting Judith to participate in group sex. Exner began sobbing hysterically, and Sinatra dismissed the other woman. Sinatra later made amends and invited Judith to see his show in Las Vegas.

It was there, on Feb. 7, 1960, at the Sands hotel, that Sinatra introduced Exner to John Kennedy. Then campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination, Kennedy was accompanied by his brother Ted. Exner still gets animated and girlish when recalling that night. "When you talked to Jack," she says, "he talked just to you. He was endlessly curious about everything and everybody. He loved gossip. That night he did not want me to leave his side." Yet it was Ted Kennedy who asked Exner to show him the town after Sinatra's show, and she complied. She says Ted later made a pass at her that she rebuffed.

The next day, Jack Kennedy invited Exner to lunch on Sinatra's patio, where they talked about everything from family

Mobsters Johnny Roselli (left) and Sam Giancana failed in their attempts to eliminate Fidel Castro.

life to Catholicism. (Judith was raised a Catholic.) In the course of their three-hour meal, Exner also told Kennedy about his brother's advances of the night before. In her book she recorded Jack's laughing response: "That little rascal. You'll have to excuse his youthful exuberance."

For the next month, says Exner, Kennedy called her almost every day. "He asked me about my day," reports Exner, "who I saw, what I did, and I'd ask him about the campaign. He seemed very anxious to get together again. I was elated, almost giddy. The world looked wonderful." They arranged to meet at the Plaza in New York on March 7, the night before the New Hampshire primary.

"It was a wonderful night of lovemaking," says Exner. "Jack couldn't have been more loving, more concerned about my feelings, more considerate, more gentle. Later, because of his bad back and an arrogance that overtook him in the White House, he developed a cavalier attitude in bed, as if he were there to be serviced. But in the beginning, when I fell in love with him, he was very demonstrative. It was amazing to me that he could be so relaxed on the eve of the first primary of his presidential campaign, but unbelievably, he didn't mention New Hampshire once during our entire night together. The next morning, he sent me a dozen red roses with a card that said, 'Thinking of you...J.'"

A week later Sinatra invited Judith to join him in Miami Beach at the Fontainebleau hotel, where he was appearing. There Frank introduced her to his mobster

friends, Joe Fischetti and Sam Giancana, whom Sinatra called "Sam Flood." "I didn't know then that Sam was the Chicago Godfather," says Exner, "but I did know he was important to Frank because of the way Sinatra acted around him, bowing and scraping and being so deferential."

Once she knew Giancana and was intimate with Kennedy, Exner was in a perfect position to act as a liaison. "I feel like I was set up to be the courier," she says now. "I was a perfect choice because I could come and go without notice, and if noticed, no one would've believed it anyway." Producing plane tickets, hotel bills and her appointment books from 1960, 1961 and 1962, she finally discloses the secret she has kept for 25 years. Only her husband Dan Exner, she says, knew the truth. "I never told anyone else, because I thought I'd be killed. Look what happened to Jack, and to Sam, who was murdered in his house while under police surveillance," she says.

Exner's first assignment as courier, she says, was suggested by JFK at dinner in his Georgetown townhouse on April 6, 1960. Jackie, then pregnant with John Jr., was away in Florida. Exner says she felt uncomfortable making love with Kennedy in the bed he shared with his wife. However, Exner says, "my interest in Jack, my need to be with him, was stronger than my conscience." A third person, a lobbyist named Bill, was at dinner that night. "He and Jack spent the entire evening discussing strategy for the West Virginia primary," says Exner. "That



was the one he was really worried about because he was Catholic and running against Hubert Humphrey, a Protestant, in a state that was 95 percent Protestant. Jack and the lobbyist talked about getting money into West Virginia and about who had influence in the state. In the middle of their conversation, Jack turned to me and said, 'Could you quietly arrange a meeting with Sam for me?'

"Why, or should I ask?" responded Exner, who had told Kennedy in a previous phone conversation about being introduced to a "Sam Flood," one of Sinatra's close friends. (Exner did not know until months later that Sam Flood was the Chicago Godfather. She now assumes that Kennedy was well aware of Sam's identity.) "I think I may need his help in the campaign," Jack said. He wanted the meeting as soon as possible and gave me a few dates that were good for him."

Pleased to be of help, Exner called Giancana the next morning and said she'd like to talk to him in Chicago. "I arrived at 8:30 a.m. on April 8th and talked to Sam at a Chicago club," says Exner. "I told Sam that Jack wanted to meet with him because he needed his help in the campaign. Sam agreed to the meeting, and we set the date for four days later at the Fontainebleau in Miami Beach. I called Jack to tell him, then I flew to Miami because Kennedy wanted me to be there."

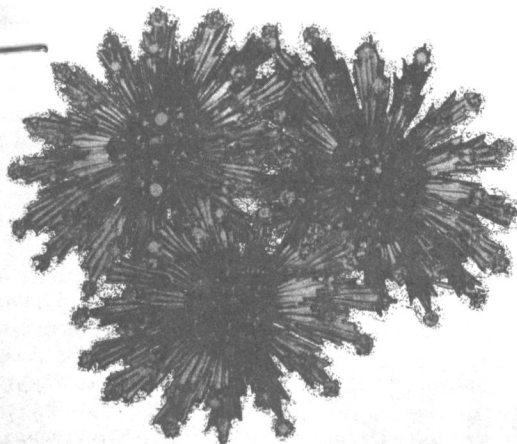
Kennedy met with Giancana at the Fontainebleau on April 12. "I was not present," says Exner, "but Jack came to my suite afterward, and I asked him how the meeting had gone. He seemed very happy about it and thanked me for making the arrangements. He then stayed with me for an hour or so, and we talked about the campaign. Jack told me that if he didn't get the nomination in July, he and his wife would get a divorce. He didn't say he was leaving her for me or for any other woman, or that Jackie was leaving him for any other man. He simply said that their marriage was unhappy and the divorce was a mutual decision between them."

As Kennedy was leaving, he handed Exner an envelope, telling her not to open it until he was gone. Inside, she found two \$1,000 bills. "Jack said he wanted to pay for the new mink coat that I had worn to his house in Georgetown," says Exner, "or if I wouldn't let him do that, then he wanted me to buy something special." She kept the cash and later deposited it in her checking account.

That first meeting between Kennedy and Giancana seems to have been about the West Virginia primary. FBI wiretaps show large Mafia donations to the state campaign that were apparently disbursed by Frank Sinatra. This under-the-table

At a White House dinner in 1962, JFK and Jackie appeared the happy couple; earlier, says Exner, Jack talked of divorce.

ARTHUR RICKERBY/LIFE



Exner has kept this diamond-and-ruby brooch for 26 years but now is considering selling Kennedy's gift.

money was used to make payoffs to key election officials. Giancana dispatched Paul "Skinny" D'Amato, who owned the famed 500 Club in Atlantic City, to the state to use his influence with the sheriffs who gambled in the illegal gaming rooms of Greenbrier County. These men controlled the state's political machine, and many of them had been customers at Skinny's club. Some still owed Skinny money, and others were more than happy to do him a favor, which was rewarded from a cash supply of more than \$50,000. Their job was to get the vote out for Kennedy—any way they could. Kennedy won the May 10 primary easily, with 61 percent of the vote.

After Kennedy received the nomination in July, he asked Exner to arrange several more meetings with Giancana. She assumes that at least one of them, at the Navarro Hotel in New York in early August, had to do with the general election. "After Jack was elected," says Exner, "Sam kept saying he would never have been President if it hadn't been for his efforts on Kennedy's behalf in Cook County, Illinois." An overwhelming turnout for Kennedy in Cook County enabled him to carry Illinois by a slim 8,858 votes.

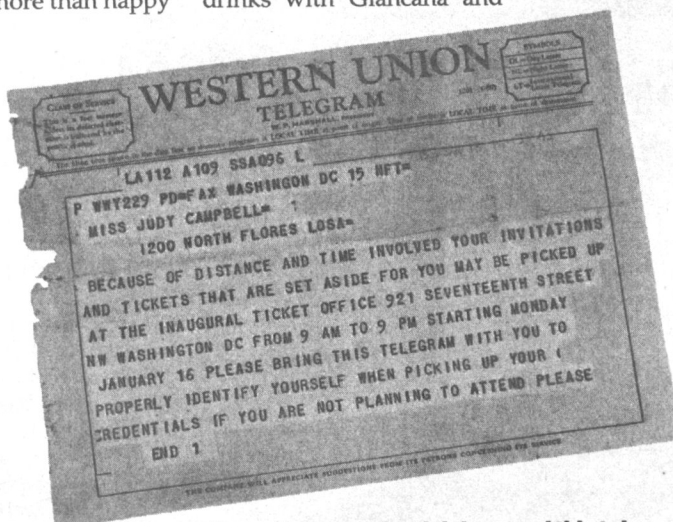
In the early months of his Administration, Kennedy had little time for Exner. During this period, the presence of a Communist regime in nearby Cuba was becoming a major political issue. On April 17, 1961, the CIA backed an attempt by Cuban nationalists to oust Castro. The failure of the infamous Bay of Pigs invasion was a major embarrassment for the Kennedy Administration. The President told the nation he accepted sole blame for the Cuban fiasco.

A few days after the bungled invasion, Kennedy called Exner in California and asked her to fly to Las Vegas to pick up an envelope from Roselli, which she was to deliver to Giancana in Chicago. Once there, she arranged a meeting between the

President and the Mafia boss. It took place in her suite at the Ambassador East on April 28.

"It was a short meeting early in the evening," Exner remembers. "Sam arrived first and then Jack, who put his arms around me and said, 'I'm sorry I can't stay and see you for the evening.' He was in town to address a Democratic party dinner. He then went over and shook Sam's hand. Sam said hello; he called him Jack, not Mr. President. I asked them if they would like me to leave. Jack said, 'No, I'd rather you didn't.' I guess he didn't want me to be seen leaving the room. To give them privacy, I then went into the bathroom, sat on the edge of the tub and waited until they were finished."

On April 29, at Kennedy's request, Exner flew to Florida, where she had drinks with Giancana and



Though she received tickets and this telegram, Exner declined to attend JFK's inaugural because she felt uncomfortable.

Roselli, who were there for a meeting. She picked up another envelope from them and returned to Washington on May 4th. Exner then called the White House and asked for Evelyn Lincoln, who put her right through to the President. Says Exner, "We were scheduled to have lunch at the White House on Saturday, May 6, but he said the envelope couldn't wait, so I took it to him late Friday afternoon. I took a taxi to the West Entrance, checked in with the guards, and was escorted to the Cabinet Room by a Kennedy aide.

"I gave him the envelope and he teasingly asked me if I had had a nice time in Florida. 'Did you have to spend that much time down there?' he said.

"I was there for you, Jack."

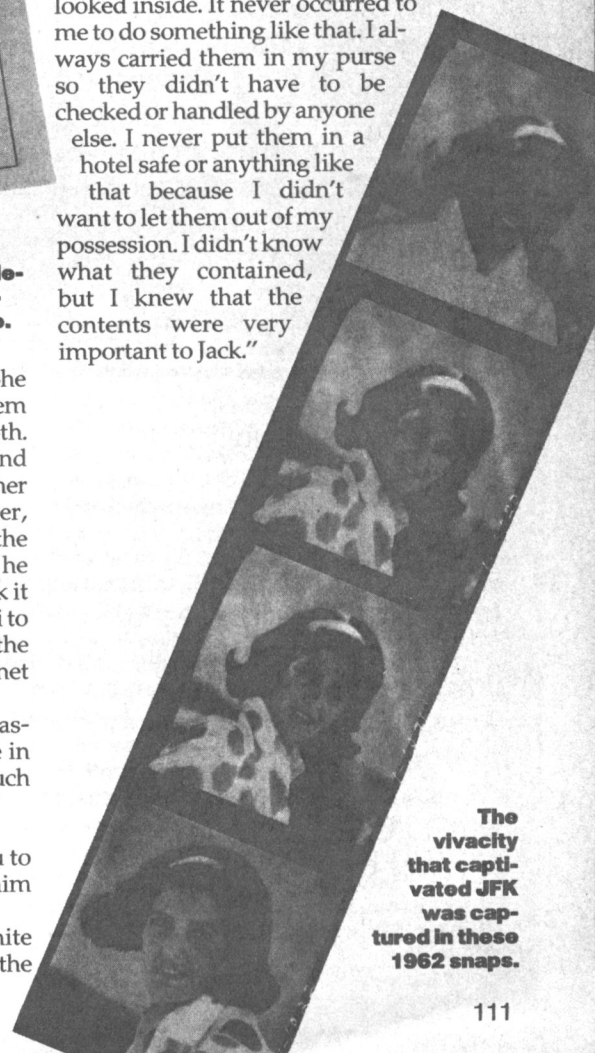
"How's Sam? Now I don't want you to get too friendly with him. Don't let him turn your head."

The next day Exner went to the White House for lunch. She was shown into the

family quarters, where she and Dave Powers made small talk while Kennedy took a swim. Over hamburgers in the family dining room, Kennedy questioned Exner closely about Sinatra. "How's Frank?" he asked. "What's he doing? Who's he seeing?" He loved Hollywood gossip, and was insatiably curious about everything, but especially about Frank and his love life," Exner remembers. "They seemed to have a genuine mutual admiration society; Frank was in awe of Jack's background and his power as President, and Jack was mesmerized by Sinatra's swinging lifestyle."

After lunch, Kennedy escorted Exner into the master bedroom. "I saw twin beds," she reports. "Jack then led me through an alcove to another bedroom with a large double bed and we made love." As he was showing her out, Kennedy gave Exner an envelope he wanted delivered to Giancana.

For days and sometimes weeks at a time that spring and summer, Exner crisscrossed the country by train and plane at her own expense carrying plain 9" by 12" manila envelopes from Kennedy to Giancana and Roselli and back again. "They were sealed but not taped," says Exner. "There was no writing on them, no labels, no stamped address, nothing. They weighed about as much as a weekly magazine and felt as if they contained papers, but I don't know for sure because I never looked inside. It never occurred to me to do something like that. I always carried them in my purse so they didn't have to be checked or handled by anyone else. I never put them in a hotel safe or anything like that because I didn't want to let them out of my possession. I didn't know what they contained, but I knew that the contents were very important to Jack."



The vivacity that captivated JFK was captured in these 1962 snaps.

Blindly accepting her role as the President's personal messenger, Exner never questioned what she was asked to do. "I thought I was in love with Jack. He trusted me and I was doing something important for him," she says. "I was 26 years old, and I didn't have any great purpose in my life. That's probably why I became so involved in doing this, and did it with much gusto. I guess I felt I was doing something important."

Not until 1975, when the Senate committee report came out, did Exner guess at what might have been in the envelopes. It finally dawned on me that I was probably helping Jack orchestrate the attempted assassination of Fidel Castro with the help of the Mafia," she says.

Exner speculates that, in addition to communicating via courier, Kennedy and Giancana talked privately on the phone. The White House logs show at least one call from Sam's home outside Chicago to the White House," she says. "That was not a call I ever made." Moreover, Exner suspects that Kennedy and Giancana met at the White House. "If they did, Sam probably signed in under one of his aliases, like Dr. Goldberg, Dr. Gold or Tom Flood," she says. The White House visitors' log in the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston shows none of those names admitted to the Oval Office on August 8, 1961, the day Sam Giancana appeared at Exner's Washington hotel room. Exner told her he had just come from a meeting with Kennedy. According to Ron Folsom, head librarian at the Kennedy Library, "There was an unofficial back door to the Oval Office that was supervised by Kenny O'Donnell, and we have logs on any of those visits."

As the summer progressed, Kennedy grew more preoccupied with the problems of the Presidency. He was criticized for not coming across as a strong and decisive leader at his first meeting with an arrogant Soviet Premier Khrushchev in Vienna. Then, in August, the East Germans erected the Berlin Wall. A distracted Kennedy grew more imperious with Exner. He also grossly offended her during an August meeting at the White House. In front of presidential aide Dave Powers, Kennedy asked Exner if she had told anyone about a night the year before when he had suggested a *ménage à trois*, and she had refused. "Word had gotten back to him," says Exner. "I was as angry as hell for [suggesting a *ménage à trois*], as I had been angry at Frank. Now he was bringing it up in front of Dave, and I got mad all over again."

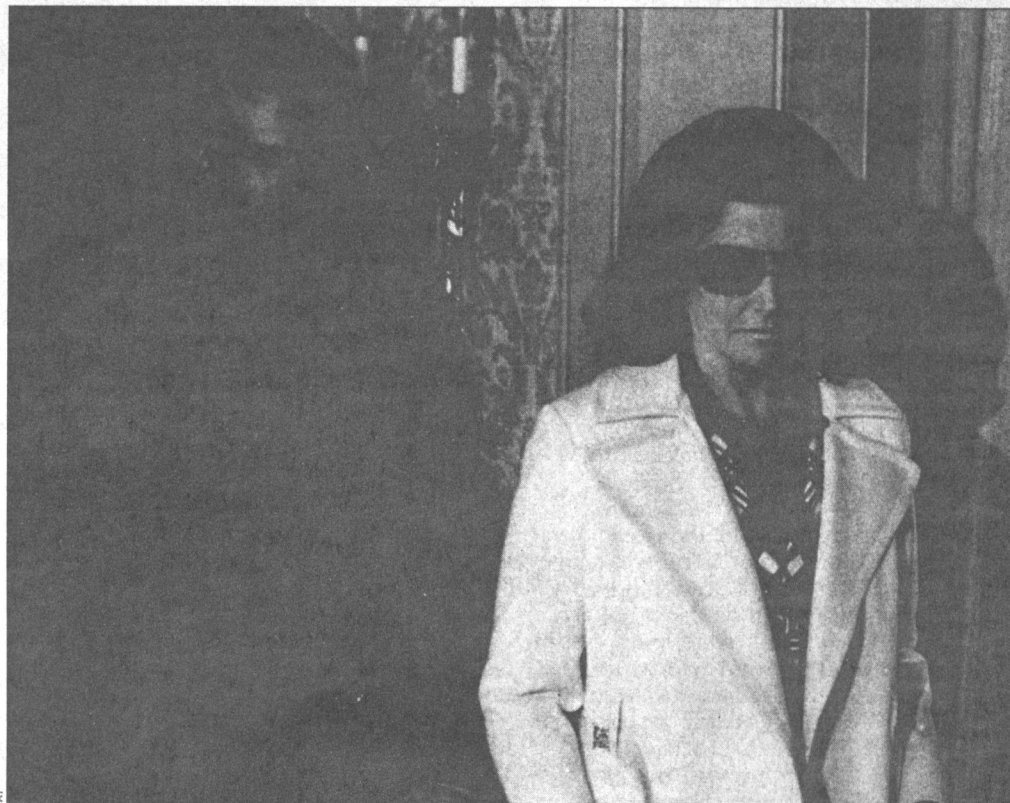
Still, Exner says she agreed to pick up a more envelope from Giancana and Roselli and bring it back to the White House. There, in the big double bed in the private quarters on August 24, Kennedy presented Exner with a diamond-and-gold brooch.

"I'm glad you're feeling guilty," Exner told Kennedy. The President reassured her: "Let this remind you that if my intentions go astray from time to time, my heart is in the right place."

Exner still has the brooch, an 18-carat gold spray of three daisy-like flowers with ruby centers and petals sprinkled with diamonds. "It was a beautiful present from a man I loved very much and who I thought loved me," Exner says. The brooch and the envelope containing \$2,000 were the only gifts Exner ever received from Kennedy. "He always wanted to pay for my tickets and hotels, but I wouldn't let him," she says. "I was fiercely independent."

whether RFK knew of his brother's dealings with the Mafia.) The federal agents following Sam naturally saw Exner in his company. They began watching her apartment, she says, and followed her when she went shopping. "They hounded me about Sam, and I was terrified," says Exner. "I called Jack immediately to tell him that the FBI had been to see me, asking all sorts of questions about Sam. I told him I had said I knew nothing about Sam's business affairs. Jack reassured me. He said, 'Don't worry. They won't do anything to you. And don't worry about Sam. You know he works for us.' He told me that over and over: 'Don't worry. Sam works for us.'"

As the FBI surveillance increased, Exner pressured Kennedy to intervene. "He'd



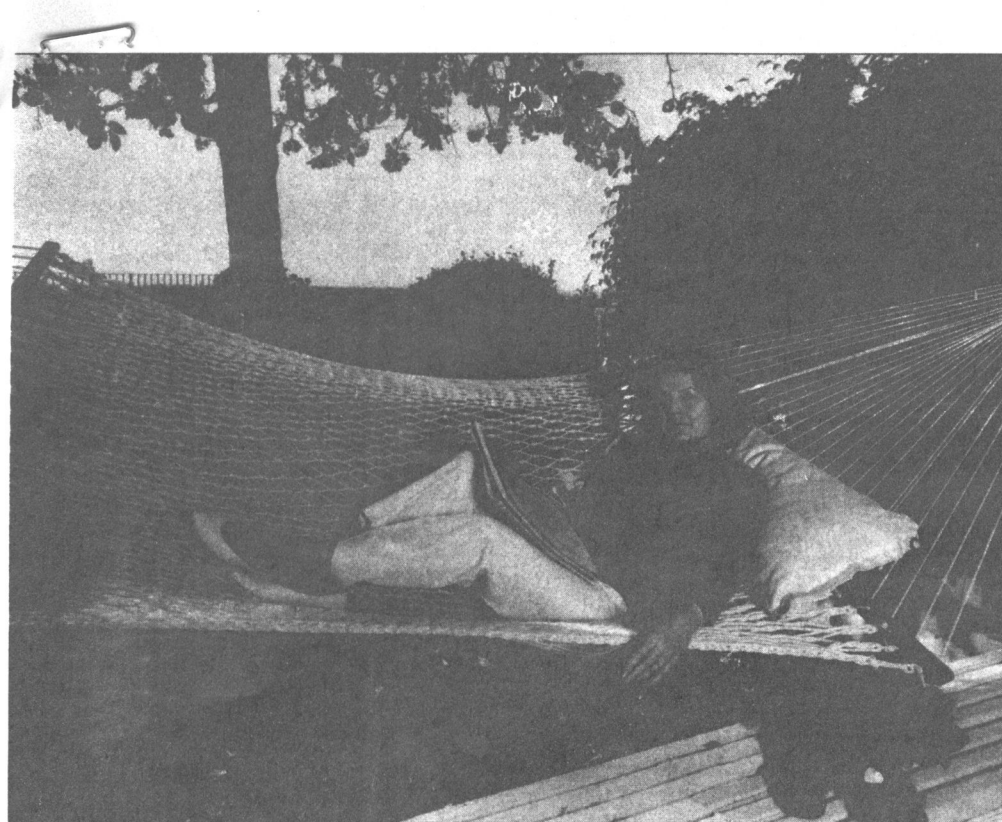
Second husband Dan Exner accompanied Judith to the 1975 press conference in San Diego, where she denied allegations that she was more than Kennedy's lover.

By early 1962, their relationship had begun to sour. "I was very lonely a lot of the time," says Exner, "going with a married man. Also, I was raised a Catholic and knew that such an illicit relationship was wrong in the eyes of God, but I suppose I rationalized things because Jack had said his marriage was unhappy and divorce was a possibility." Though she had visited Kennedy about 20 times at the White House, Exner now started to resent the suggestion that she was supposed to jump every time he called. "There were lots of little arguments," she remembers. "He called less and I called less."

By that time, Exner realized she was being followed. In his drive against organized crime, Attorney General Robert Kennedy had targeted Sam Giancana for top-priority investigation. (It is not known

say, 'Ignore them. It's just part of Hoover's vendetta against me.' He hated J. Edgar Hoover and called him 'a queer son of a bitch.' As the harassment got worse, Jack lost patience with me. 'You've got to learn how to handle this,' he'd say. 'I've got more important things to deal with.'"

On March 22, 1962, Hoover had a luncheon meeting with Kennedy at the White House to tell him that the FBI's investigation of the Mafia had revealed Exner's ties to Johnny Roselli and Sam Giancana. In addition, Hoover said, Exner had made calls to the White House and seemed to have a telephone relationship with the President's secretary. Not knowing that she had been seeing Giancana and Roselli at the President's request, Hoover warned Kennedy of the potential damage to his image if word got out.



Exner (with dog Tiger) still paints regularly and takes pleasure in the thought that Kennedy liked the pencil sketch (below) she made of the President in 1961.

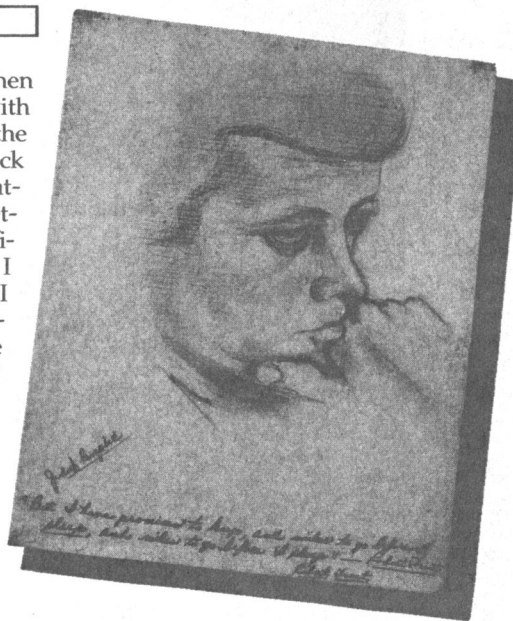
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Exner says Kennedy was enraged when he called and told her of the meeting with Hoover. "I was so upset hearing about the lunch with Hoover that I didn't go back to Washington right away, which irritated Jack," says Exner. "We weren't getting along very well then and when I finally did see him a few weeks later, I said I was sick of everything—the FBI agents and running back to Washington every time Jackie left the White House. He told me to stop worrying. 'If you'd just move here to Washington, there wouldn't be any problems,' he said."

By the summer of 1962, the relationship was over. "There was no big argument or anything like that," says Exner. "It was just two people no longer willing to put up with each other. The gloss was gone."

During her affair with Kennedy, when Exner had felt lonely or frustrated, she had often turned to Giancana for friendship and sympathy. "Sam was one of the nicest, kindest people I knew," she says. "I didn't know he was a murderer. I wouldn't have believed it." Only when she was no longer sleeping with Kennedy, she says, did she allow herself to drift into an affair with Giancana, who was a widower. The affair lasted just a few months, during the fall of 1962. "I was never in love with Sam. Our affair was over when he proposed and I said I didn't want to marry him."

Trying to put the past behind her, Exner settled down in Beverly Hills. On November 22, 1963, she was at a local hotel waiting to move into a new house when she learned that Kennedy had been assassinated.



ed. "I was so devastated that I couldn't function for a while," she says. Not long after, emotionally fragile and unable to deal with the continued FBI harassment, she attempted suicide by taking sleeping pills. Her family supported her then, and again stood by her when she gave birth to an illegitimate son in 1965. Exner will not discuss the identity of the father. Her family cared for the child for nearly a year and then she gave up the boy for adoption. "I suffer with that every day of my life, but I think it was one of the really right things I've ever done," Exner says softly. "I couldn't bring him up with the FBI constantly hounding me, following me everywhere. I couldn't subject my son to that

kind of life. When I signed the adoption papers, it was with the assurance that his identity would never be revealed."

In 1972, after years spent caring for her parents, both of whom died of cancer, Judith met Dan Exner, who was preparing to join the professional golf circuit. They married in 1975. "We were in seventh heaven," she says. Then, four months after their wedding, the Senate committee subpoenaed Exner. Of her testimony then, she says, "I lied before to protect myself. If I'd told the truth, I'd have been killed. I kept my secret out of fear."

Exner's fears were not unfounded. Senate investigators were ready to call Giancana to testify before the committee when, on the night of June 19, 1975, he was shot seven times in the head in his Oak Park, Ill., kitchen. The killer was never found. Days later, Roselli testified before the Senate committee about the CIA attempts on Castro, including Giancana's role. A year later, Roselli's body was found in a 55-gallon oil drum weighted with heavy chains floating in Dumbofounding Bay near Miami.

With each death, Exner grew more fearful. She and Dan had unlisted phone numbers and used post office boxes as their mailing address. "I became paralyzed with fear and started sleeping with a gun under my pillow," she says. "I couldn't afford to let anyone but Dan know that I had been the courier."

In 1978, Exner's doctor found a lump in her breast. It proved malignant, and she underwent a radical mastectomy. The next year, her husband was told he had a brain tumor, which destroyed the function of his pituitary gland. Though the tumor was removed, Dan was left weak and eventually was unable to work. The deaths of several close family members increased the strain on the Exners. "Dan and I withstood all this together," she says. But by 1985 they had decided to separate. "Although we no longer are together, we speak on the phone several times a week and are not yet seeking a divorce," Judith says. "I will always love Dan. He was the best part of my life."

Alone and weakened by her illness, Exner tries to get out each day to see friends and her brother and his children, who live nearby. She does some oil painting and feels that she has at last found a measure of serenity. After years of living in fear, Exner says she is relieved at last to tell the truth about her relationship with Kennedy.

"Now that I know I'm dying and nothing more can happen to me, I want to be completely honest," she says. "I don't think I should have to die with the secret of what I did for Jack Kennedy, or what he did with the power of his Presidency. I feel that I am finally free of the past." □